

Message Text

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USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LENINGRD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5279

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, R

SUBJ: CPSU PLENUM OUSTS SHELEPIN, SETS DATE FOR NEXT PARTY CONGRESS

REF: A. MOSCOW 1310; B. HELSINKI 2538 OF DEC 17, 1974.

1. SNAP PLENUM OF CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE HELD APRIL 16 AND

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ANNOUNCED ON 1500 NEWS PROGRAM. BREZHNEV SPOKE; FOREIGN

MINISTER GROMYKO REPORTED ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSED THE REPORT: UKRAINIAN PREMIER LYASHKO; LITHUANIAN PARTY LEADER GRISHKYAVICHYUS; KAZAKH PREMIER ASHIMOV; AZERBAYDZHAN PARTY LEADER ALIYEV; LENINGRAD SHIPYARD WORKER V.V. SMIRNOV; SECRETARY G.M. MARKOV OF BOARD OF UNION OF WRITERS. DECREE ADOPTED ON REPORT. A.N. SHELEPIN WAS RELEASED FROM POLITBURO "AT HIS REQUEST". 25TH PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED TO OPEN ON FEBRUARY 24, 1975.

2. COMMENT: SHELEPIN IS, OF COURSE, OLD RIVAL OF BREZHNEV AND WITH HIS REMOVAL POLITICAL BALANCE IN THE POLITBURO HAS CLEARLY SHIFTED IN BREZHNEV'S FAVOR. WHILE SHELEPIN'S DISASTROUS LONDON VISIT OF APRIL 1-2 MAY HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN THIS POLITBURO DECISION, SINCE IT DID MUCH TO UNDO GOOD EFFECTS ON UK-SOVIET RELATIONS OF WILSON VISIT TO MOSCOW IN FEBRUARY, THIS IN AND OF ITSELF WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE SUFFICIENT CAUSE TO REMOVE SHELEPIN FROM POLITBURO. OUR PRELIMINARY GUESS WOULD BE THAT SHELEPIN MAY WELL HAVE COMMITTED SOME RECENT POLITICAL INDISCRETION WHICH TURNED THE TIDE WITH OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS -- PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO WOULD BE LEERY ABOUT ENHANCING BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL POWER. SHELEPIN HAS, IN FACT, BEEN ON A DOWNWARD SLOPE FOR A DECADE. HE MAY WELL HAVE SEEN BREZHNEV'S PERIOD OF ILLNESS LAST WINTER AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MANEUVER TO IMPROVE HIS LEADERSHIP STATUS AND THIS MAY HAVE GIVEN BREZHNEV THE OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE SHELEPIN -- AN OPPORTUNITY THAT HE HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR SINCE 1965. THIS IS PURE SPECULATION BASED ON NEWS WHICH BROKE HERE TWO HOURS AGO AND WE HAVE NO CNCRETE EVIDENCE.

3. THE FURTURE OF SHELEPIN IS ENTIRELY UNCLEAR AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, POLITBURO MEMBERSHIP MAY REMAIN AT 15 AS IT IS DESIRABLE TO HAVE AN ODD NUMBER OF MEMBERS SO THAT TIE VOTES WILL BE EXCLUDED. W WOULD EXPECT THAT SHELEPIN WILL VACATE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT THE POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE NEW INCUMBENT WILL GIVE FURTHER INDICATION OF POLITBURO MOVEMENT AT THE TOP LEVEL. WE ARE STRUCK
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THAT NO ANNOUNCEMENT HAS YET BEEN MADE ON THE REPLACEMENT BY THE PELNUM FOR DEMICHEV AS PARTY SECRETARY FOR CULTURE. THIS WOULD TEND TO INDICATE THAT CONSIDERABLE JUGGLING FOR POWER IS STILL GOING ON AND THAT BREZHNEV MAY NOT BE HAVING THINGS ENTIRELY HIS OWN WAY.

4. NEVERTHELESS, BREZHNEV'S POSITION HAS CLEARLY BEEN SUPPORTER, MADE MAIN REPORT TO THE PLENUM, WOULD ALSO

BE INDICATIVE OF THIS.

5. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT REMOVAL OF SHELEPIN HAS ANY IMPLICATION FOR SOVIET DETENTE POLICY. HE HAS BOTH IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER OF DETENTE. MOST RECENT INDICATIONS OF THIS WERE HIS JANUARY 28 SPEECH AND HIS PRIVATE REMARKS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO HELSINKI (REFTELS). HOWEVER, SINCE BREZHNEV IS NOW STRONGER, AND SINCE THE DETENTE POLICY IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HIM, THE STRENGTHENING OF BREZHNEV WOULD INDICATE THAT DETENTE POLICY HAS ALSO CORRESPONDINGLY BEEN STRENGTHENED.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPENING DATE FOR THE 25TH CONGRESS SHOULD TRIGGER A CYCLE OF PARTY MEETINGS WHICH WILL BEGIN IN THE FALL AND CONTINUE UP THROUGH THE HIERARCHY AND END BY LATE JANUARY OR EARLY FEBRUARY. PERSONNEL SHIFTS PROBABLY WILL BE OCCURRING FROM NOW ON AT ALL LEVELS WITHIN THE CPSU AND FINAL RESULT OF THESE SHIFTS WILL DETERMINE THE RELATIVE POLITICAL STRENGTH OF THE VARIOUS SOVIET LEADERS FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.
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